



Recommendations/Tips

Library Cards

- It is desirable to get as many families signed up for library cards as possible. This may require re-evaluation of library policies and finding sources of funding for non-resident cards.
- In order to track My First Books library card applicants, try copying the application on specially colored paper.
- See “**Library Cards and Outreach Programs Barriers and Solutions**” for more tips.

Working With Your Partner(s)

- Meet with your partner(s) before your first book distribution to plan the monthly visits. Suggest a consistent schedule, i.e. the first Wednesday of each month. Avoid Monday and Friday distributions because those days are often holidays or scheduled school dismissal days. Email your partner a week or two prior to your visit to remind them of the date and to confirm participation numbers.
- Suggest that your partner send a letter home to parents with the above information. You can access a sample letter/template on our website.
- State your expectations for the book distributions up front. For example, child care providers need to stay in the room during the storytime and book distributions.
- Be sure your partner understands that each month focuses on an early literacy skill, and find ways in which you can collaborate on activities.
- Ask your partner to explain the check-in procedures for your visits. Schools and most centers require visitors to sign in and possibly wear a special badge. Allow extra time before your appointment for this procedure.
- In March or April, meet with your partner(s) to discuss how the parent surveys will be distributed and collected for a maximum return rate.
- In May, meet with your partner(s) to debrief the program and collect parent surveys.
- Report back to your partner(s) on your outcomes or send them a copy of the final report and a thank you note. For example, if you had 20 percent of the My First Books families get library cards or you had 70 percent return the parent surveys, let them know (even if your percentages are low). You might consider summarizing the parent evaluations to report back to your partner(s) and your library board and other stakeholders; for example, “80 percent of parents who returned the parent evaluation forms indicated they spent more time reading to their child as a result of the My First Books program.”

Class visits and book distribution:

- The monthly cover letters sent with your books often contain resources and links to storytime/craft ideas. An electronic version of the cover letter is sent via email to you so that you can simply click on the hyperlinks.

- If possible, allow preschool and kindergarten children to write their own name in their book. This is a great opportunity to practice writing their name!
- There is space on the back of *The Bookworms* for you to include your library's monthly programs, events, information regarding library cards, etc. Address or shipping labels work well for this. Use the "mailings and labels" function in Word to create label templates.
- Share (or ask your partner to share) your distribution dates and times with the principal or center director and ask them to place them on the school's or center's master calendar. This could prevent having to deal with a fire or emergency drill during your visit, and lets office staff know to expect you.

Parent Workshop/Family Literacy Event

- It is desirable for the family reading event to be held at the public library.
- Idaho librarians have had better luck getting parents to show up for late fall and winter events versus those held in late spring (April and May) when sporting and school events tend to compete for parents' time.
- From past MFB Report Summaries, libraries whose community partner(s) co-hosted the event typically reported higher attendance rates than libraries who held the event solo.
- See "**Motivating Parents to Attend Your Early Literacy Event**" for more tips and recommendations.

Suggestions from Parent Surveys:

- Affix a sticker to each child the day books and newsletters are coming home. (Address labels work great for this. See sample on website.)
- Include a map and directions to the library on the newsletter.
- Email/text parents (at partner organization) with date book is coming home, special events at library, book suggestions, etc., and when next book will come home.
- Put library events on *The Bookworm*.
- Send a letter explaining the program before it starts.
- Send books at same time every month so parents can look in backpacks, and print a notice at the beginning of the program.
- Send info on how to get a library card.
- Start the year with a parent get-together to better explain the program.
- Include a list of appropriate books for age/ability.
- Post on Facebook page.
- Post a sign on Distribution Day announcing books and newsletters are being sent home that day (see sample on website).

